

Impeding Coherence

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Category: Halo

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2005-02-02 01:15:02

Updated: 2005-02-03 05:14:18

Packaged: 2016-04-27 00:41:12

Rating: K+

Chapters: 2

Words: 2,987

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The Covenant have sided with the Flood in the war against humanity. All hope seems lost until an unexpected ally comes to the aid of the Chief and his fellow marines.

1. Projected Enemy

****I : Projected Enemy****

John Sat up wide-awake in his cot. The room was pitch black but his eyes were genetically enhanced and so he walked with ease into a dull, slightly uninviting washroom. He turned the knob over a faucet and water poured into the stainless steel sink. He let the water run over his face for a minute and then turned it back off. After drying his face, he walked back into the room. The Chief put on heavier clothes, his MJOLNIR and picked a shotgun up off the table in the far corner of the room. He then walked out of the room and turned left down the hall, the door shutting behind him. When he reached the end of the hall, he stopped in front of a large interlocking door. On it was a label with _CTS 02_ engraved into it, which stood for Combat Training Simulator 02. After a short pause, a blue holographic image of a woman appeared on a ledge to the left of the door.

"Hello Chief." She replied with a certain lifelike impression.

"Hello Cortana. Load a level 4 program." John responded.

"And who would you like to challenge today?" She queried lightheartedly.

"5 Elites, 15 Grunts and... 10 Jackals. Add in a Brute too." He instructed.

"Program ready. Go get 'em Chief."

The doors slid apart and he stepped inside. The room revealed an Earth city, perhaps mid 21st century. The buildings appeared sooty

and in mediocre condition. The Chief took a quick glance around, ran to the right and stopped in the middle of a road. He looked down it, and there were 5 Elites, about half of the Jackals and a rather large pack of Grunts. For a moment, the nemeses stood and stared at each other, and then the Grunts started firing plasma pistols and rifles. The Chief dove to the left and evaded their fire. He then jumped back out into the road and another hail of plasma bullets came flying at him. He again dodged most of them and began running and strafing towards the group. He fired the shotgun and sent three Grunts hauling through the air and into the Jackals behind them. When he was nearly up in their faces, he fired more shots and flattened multiple Grunts and Jackals. He then dove to the right behind an overturned car as the hail of plasma narrowly missed him. For a moment all fire stopped. The Elites sent a group of Grunts to search around the corner of the car. They surprisingly all came back intact and looked puzzled as they found nothing. As they turned back to report their findings, they watched an Elite fall to its knees, and then on the ground, followed by the one next to it. As that one fell an armored soldier replaced its image. The Chief fired the shotgun again and sent three more Elites stumbling backwards. He fired again, and they fell, purple blood now forming a large puddle on the ground. At this site, the Grunts turned from courageous to terrified and scattered in all directions until another shot blew them back and onto the ground. The Jackals then turned around and backed up, all the while firing behind their shields. The Chief quickly meleed a Grunt and grabbed its plasma pistol. He waited for a second as it charged up, and then released the bolt. It slammed into one of the Jackals' shields, instantly rendering it inoperable. He repeated this again until all of the Jackals were then defenseless. The Chief dropped the pistol, picked up the shotgun, and ran at the Jackals, his own shields now critical. A quick shot put two of them on the ground, and he dove to the side behind a cargo container. The last Jackal, now standing alone, looked wearily around for him. The Chief swept silently up behind, and bashed its head in with the butt of the gun.

During all of the fighting, he had almost forgot about the Brute. He looked quickly around but did not see anything. He also took this moment to reload, seeing as he had only two shots left. When he finished reloading, he started walking towards a building, searching all around him for the Brute. He walked through an open doorway, and suddenly felt a slash across his back. He whipped around and saw the hulking figure, part bear, part ape and all killing machine. He was no more than three feet from it, which was good and bad. It was good because the Brute wouldn't be stupid enough to use its grenade launcher at such close range. It was bad because it would be smart enough to use the blade on the end of it. However, the Chief ducked at just the right moment and narrowly missed the razor sharp metal. He then drew a plasma grenade and stuck it to the Brute's grenade launcher. Once he had seen it stick, he got up and started running towards an overturned truck, but couldn't get to it in time and was blown onto the ground by the blast of the grenade. He got up a few seconds later, picked up his gun and, when he looked back, found nothing but pieces of the Brute strewn across the ground. As he walked towards the door, he threw one last frag grenade over his shoulder and heard the scream of a Grunt a few seconds later.

2. Reconnaissance and Reinforcement

**II : Reconnaissance and Reinforcement **

The doors slid open and the Chief walked out of the room. Cortana appeared on the ledge again and complimented him on his performance. He took no notice though and continued back toward his room. No more than a minute after he had got back, he was ordered to the bridge. When he got there Sergeant Johnson and Captain Keyes greeted him.

"Good to see you Chief. Just got back from exercising probably, right?" Johnson asked.

"Ya." The Chief responded dully.

"Well, sorry to bother but we've got a little job for you. We've recently picked up a Covenant transport frigate three parsecs from our position. A closer analysis by Cortana has revealed that the ship is carrying numerous tactical records, among which is a drive that has stored on it the Covenant's latest primary tactical objectives. Now I know I don't need to tell you the importance of these records and what we would gain from retrieving them. And, well, to be quite frank, you're the obvious man for the job."

"Just tell me what to do captain."

"Alright then. Now your first objective should obviously be to infiltrate the enemy vessel. Cortana, how long until we're in range?" Johnson asked.

"We should be within boarding range of their vessel in approximately one hour."

"Very good. Now then, once you enter the ship, you'll- well, let me just show you a map."

Johnson hit a button on a console to the left of him and a map that resembled a blueprint appeared on a large wall-mounted screen.

"Now then, when you enter this exhaust radiator, you'll proceed left down the hallway until you reach a maintenance elevator. Take this up to the fourth floor and turn right down the hall. About 400 meters up you'll come to a large shielded and locked door. Don't worry, Cortana will have established an uplink to the ship's security computer, so just give her a holler when you need it open. Now is the part where you hit some resistance. But I've known you long enough to know that you don't need any advice on that part. So, once you've retrieved the disk, follow the same way you came in from and a Pelican should be waiting for you."

"Sergeant, we'll be within range of the vessel in fifteen minutes." Cortana informed.

"Well then Chief, it looks like you should saddle up."

"Can do, serge." The Chief responded.

He walked off the bridge and to the weapons room. When he entered, a rather scrawny man greeted him.

"How's it going, Chief."

"Never been better. I came by to pick up a present for the Covenant. What do you got?"

"I'm glad you asked. I've modified the old SMGs with collapsible stocks, so now you can hold one in each hand. I've also upgraded the ammo capacity."

"Sounds good."

The engineer tossed a pair to him. After loading them and grabbing a few extra clips, the Chief walked back out of the room and toward cargo bay 06. When he reached it he walked in and put on his helmet. A woman at the far right wall was standing behind a control console.

"Cortana to Chief. We're coming up alongside the Covenant vessel."

The Chief gave a nod to the woman, and she hit a button, opening the cargo door. The Chief ran forward and flew out of the bay. He was now drifting in between the two ships, and for a moment looked down and saw a green-blue planet, eerily similar to Earth. He looked up a second later and spotted the exhaust radiator. His timing was perfect, and he slid silently into it. Once he passed the force field farther down the tube, it sealed around him and he regained his balance in the artificial gravity. He peered around the corner and saw three Grunts talking light-heartedly. He waited for a second, and slipped around the corner, dropping all three of them with a single bullet each. He then proceeded down the hall until he came across the elevator and two Elites arguing. He stopped and listened for a second, and then slipped past them into it.

The elevator stopped at level four and he stepped out and proceeded right down the hall. He encountered another group of Elites standing in front of the sealed door. He thought for a second and then came up with an idea.

"Cortana, respond."

"Cortana here, you ready for the door?"

"Not quite. There's a group of Elites standing in front of it and it doesn't look as though they're going to move anytime soon. So, when I tell you to, I want you to open the door and standby. Then, on my command, close it again."

"Alright Chief, I'm ready when you are."

He pulled two frag grenades from behind his back and removed the pins.

"Okay, open the door."

The door slid open, and the Elites, presuming they were wanted in the room, stepped inside. As soon as they did, the Chief lobbed the two grenades into the room and signaled Cortana to shut the door. He waited for two seconds, and heard a muffled bang from within the room. He waited for another minute to make sure nobody came out, and then stepped inside. There were bodies scattered all over, and the room was covered in purple blood."

"Not a bad shade. It adds a bit of color to the place." He joked to himself.

He searched the room, and found the disk labeled _.PTO_. Amazingly it hadn't been destroyed. He hadn't thought of that before he threw the grenades. After securing it in his pack, he continued out and back up the hall. When he had returned to level one, he started back towards the radiator, but stopped when he heard a very deep howl coming from the opposite end of the hall. Curious, he swept down it silently and peered around the corner to see an Honor Guard Brute coming out of a room, followed by two gold Elites with plasma rifles. The Brute's hands were covered in dull orange blood. The Chief waited until he was sure they were gone, and then crept into the room. When he entered it he found a Hunter chained to the floor with cut marks and abrasions along its neck, abdomen and armor. It had been stripped of its shield and fuel rod cannon. The Chief instantly drew his SMGs, but the Hunter made no attempt at attacking or defense. The Chief waited for a moment, and then lowered his guns.

"Your name?" he queried, still cautious.

"Wh-What?" the Hunter stuttered.

"Your name." The Chief repeated.

"K-Korlec." he responded dully.

"What happened? Why have you been injured by your own kind?" the Chief responded, now gaining confidence.

"_My_ kind? _Our_ kind? They aren't my kind. They aren't our kind. We are nothing to them. We serve as merely a tactical tool, and they exploit us to the fullest extent."

"Your kind, as in Hunters?"

"Yes. We are not recognized as the other Covenant are. Not even the Grunts. It is very strangeâ€¦ did the gods plan this?â€¦" the Hunter trailed off.

"What is strange? What plan?" the Chief was now demanding answers.

"It is strange that you have come across us, across _me_, at this moment. For we, the Hunters, have been secretly seeking succession."

"From the Covenant? Why?"

"As I have just said. We are not part of them. Not really. And it seems that as each day passes, our position, our status in their collective, decreases. Eventually decreases to-"

"What?"

"To slavery." The Hunter responded dryly. "Our race is a race of honor, in battle, in life. When we serve a cause, we serve it fully. We are honored to become injured in fighting for that cause, to _die_ for that cause. And this is what we fear the Covenant have

exploited."

The Chief suddenly heard footsteps coming down the hall.

"I can not speak with you any longer. But wait, you must take with you two vital pieces of knowledge that will help your effort. One, a vital relationship is not what it appears to be. And two, despite what you believe, you are not alone in your effort."

"Thank you. I hope we meet again." The Chief responded.

"Doubtful. I have been scheduled for-"

"For what?"

"Execution. Goodbye. And use your knowledge wisely."

At that the Chief slipped out of the room and around the corner just as the Brute and Elites returned. He reached the exhaust radiator but stopped. After thinking for a second, he ran back towards the room. Slipping around the corner he could see partially into it. They had turned the Hunter around so it was facing the doorway, and the Brute now held an energy sword to its back.

"Demon, you are not worthy of supporting the Covenant, and so you have been deemed hazardous to our cause."

"You can do what you wish, but I would rather die resisting the Covenant and Prophets' deceitful ideas, than to fall to their feet as their slave."

"Demon, you insult the Covenant and the Hierarchs! You shall be cut apart and displayed to show to all the Covenant's patience with rebels."

"Good idea, but let's use your body instead." A low voice came across from outside the room. The Brute signaled and the Elites walked out to investigate. As soon as they stepped out, they were cut down by a hail of lead. The Brute watched in disbelief as they both fell instantly. He then filled with rage and ran out the door. The Chief ducked and narrowly missed the swipe of the sword. He then flipped behind the Brute and emptied two clips into its back. The Brute fell, but got back up and grabbed the sword. He swung again and this time scathed the Chief's right forearm. His body flashed an iridescent yellow-white but he wasn't phased. He then aimed and dumped more lead into the Brute's face. It fell again, and this time didn't get back up, but rather just lay on the ground moaning. The Chief pried the sword from the Brute's hands and with one, quick fluid motion, impaled its head. He pulled the sword out, ran back into the room and quickly sliced through the chains with it.

"What are you doing?" the Hunter asked.

"I'm taking more than those two bits of knowledge with me."

"He helped the Hunter stand up and they ran back out the door and down the hall until they reached the radiator."

"Looks like we've got a bit of a problem. I don't suppose you could squeeze through there, do you?" the Chief asked incredulously.

"No, but I know another way out. You better make sure your ship is there to catch us though."

"Chief to Cortana."

"Did you get the disk?"

"Yes, are you alongside us?"

"Coming up now."

"Good. Pull up about ten meters. Don't ask why, just do it. And hurry."

"Alright, were up ten meters."

"Okay, now just wait for us."

Korlec stepped back a few feet and faced the wall. Then, he started running forward as fast as he could and tore through the hull. The Chief then followed close behind.

They both floated back through space and the Chief gave the signal to open the bay door. The two flew in, and both slammed down on the ground. They got up and the Chief reassured the woman behind the controls not to be alarmed. They looked back out at the hole in the Covenant ship.

"Well, it should help bring fresh air in." the Chief joked.

"They turned around and looked up to see a group of marines accompanied by Johnson looking at them bewildered, their guns raised at Korlec.

"Stand down boys. He's a friend." The Chief instructed.

The marines lowered their guns and Johnson walked down onto the floor cautiously, his eyes never leaving the Hunter.

"I'm sure you can fill me in, right?" he asked the Chief.

"It's a long story, but yes."

End
file.